

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4729

S E C R E T QUITO 1650

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS CIA AND DIA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EC, PINT

SUBJ: COUP RUMORS

1. DEPARTMENT WILL HAVE SEEN REPORTS FROM OTHER SOURCES ON THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ATTEMPT BEING MADE IN QUITO TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT OF GENERAL RODRIGUEZ LARA. THESE REPORTS WERE CONFIRMED DIRECTLY TO US MARCH 7 BY ONE OF PRINCIPAL NON-MILITARY PLAYERS INVOLVED.

2. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, NO SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES HAVE YET BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE PLOTTERS, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR A COUP TO BE SUCCESSFULLY BROUGHT OFF WITH SUFFICIENT SUPPORT FROM LOWER-ECHELON UNIT COMMANDERS. THE TWO PRINCIPAL PLOTTERS, GEN GALO LA TORRE AND COL RODOLFO LEIVA, ARE NOT HELD IN PARTICULAR ESTEEM BY ANY OF THEIR COLLEAGUES WHOSE EVALUATION WE WOULD BE INCLINED TO TRUST. POLITICAL ELEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PLOTTERS COME LARGELY FROM RIGHT-OF-CENTER AND ARE NEITHER BROADLY-BASED NOR REPRESENTATIVE OF CURRENT POLITICAL ATTITUDES (SUCH AS THEY ARE) IN THIS COUNTRY.

3. IF THE PLOTTERS TRY TO GO THROUGH WITH A COUP, THEY MAY BE INCLINED TO MOVE ON THE NIGHT OF TUESDAY THE 11TH/ EARLY MORNING OF WEDNESDAY THE 12TH, SHORTLY AFTER PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ IS SCHEDULED TO DEPART BUCHAREST AT

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THE END OF A STATE VISIT, AND WHEN COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN

THE PRESIDENT'S PARTY AND QUITO SHOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT,
IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

4. WE HAVE MAINTAINED A DISCREET SILENCE WITH OUR CONTACTS,
ALTHOUGH WE ARE IN TOUCH WITH BOTH SIDES, EACH OF WHICH,
CURIOSLY, KNOWS THAT THE OTHER IS WATCHING IT. THIS
LATTER FACT TENDS TO LEND SOME SUPPORT TO THE BELIEF THAT
THE GOE MAY BE SIMPLY BIDDING ITS TIME, WAITING UNTIL AN
OPPORTUNE MOMENT TO ROUND ALL THE PLOTTERS UP. IF THIS IS
THE CASE, IT SEEMS THAT THE MOST LIKELY OUTCOME IS THAT ANY
COUP ATTEMPT, IF NOT NIPPED IN THE BUD, WILL BE QUICKLY
CONTAINED BY THE GOVERNMENT WITH A SUBSEQUENT CRACK-DOWN
AGAINST ITS POLITICAL OPPONENTS.

5. WE HAVE TAKEN THE PRECAUTION OF REVIEWING OUR E&E AND
OTHER SECURITY PROCEDURES AND HAVE INSTRUCTED GUAYAQUIL TO
DO LIKEWISE. WE DO NOT PROPOSE TO TAKE ANY MOVES AT THIS
TIME WITH RESPECT TO AMERICANS IN-COUNTRY.
BREWSTER

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED CIA OR DIA.

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NNN

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